

Eng. Poetry vol 73.
S O N G S

OF THE

A B O R I G I N A L B A R D S

OF

B R I T A I N.

B Y

GEORGE RICHARDS, A. M. *k*

FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

But heed, ye Bards, that for the sign of onset
Ye found the ancientest of all your rhymes,
Whose birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd
Its lofty strains.

MASON's *Caradacus*.

O X F O R D,

SOLD BY J. COOKE:

BY G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON; F. AND C. RIVINGTON; T. AND J. EGERTON;
AND J. STOCKDALE, LONDON; AND W. LUNN, CAMBRIDGE.

M D C C X C I I.

S O N C S

OTHER

ABORIGINAL BARD

B R I T A N

GEORGE CHARLES A. M.



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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIMON EARL HARCOURT.

MY LORD,

THE Antiquary, who would be gratified by the researches of the Poet into ancient times, must advance with the most refined feelings to the contemplation of early ages. He must not estimate relics merely by their antiquity: he must not exhaust his attention by the intricacy of chronological controversies: he must not weaken the natural emotions of his mind by investigating the shape or the colour of every unimportant object, which is submitted to his inspection. But, with an enthusiasm of research, he must convey himself back among our primitive ancestors, and enter into the genius of the times in which they lived. With a judicious selection he must collect the monuments and the narratives, which illustrate their dispositions, their military prowess, their domestic œconomy, their religious rites and sentiments, the characters of their Bards and Priests, and the spirit displayed in their edifices, songs, and public institutions. Thus he will dwell with congenial feelings upon every object, which was conceived with delicacy or greatness of imagination; and will pass over in silence and with indif-

ference

ference the vestiges of common minds and trivial occupations. He will turn aside without emotion from the heavy temples of the Saxons, indulging only those melancholy reflections, with which we contemplate the memorials of a remote antiquity. But when wandering amid the isles of a Gothic cathedral, he will breathe the spirit of the architect into his own breast, and feel an awful solemnity, tempered by sensations of pleasure, diffused over his whole frame.

Let me not be supposed to undervalue the minuter enquiries into early times, which form a distinguishing characteristic of the present age. Such studies are eminently beneficial to literature, and do honour to the scholars who prosecute them. I have only described the temper of mind, which is adapted to this higher species of antiquarian research, and which it is the endeavour of the Poet to cultivate and to gratify. I have only described the temper of mind, which is displayed in the noble Personage, to whom I have the honour of offering these humble productions.

I am, my LORD,

With the utmost respect,

Your LORDSHIP's most obliged,

And most devoted servant,

ORIEL COLLEGE, Oxford,

Nov. 16, 1792.

G. RICHARDS.

THE BATTLE.

AMID the darkly-rolling storms,
That gird Helvellin's craggy fides,
With aspects fierce, and warrior strides,
The painted Britons' giant forms
Rush in wild tumult to the vale below ; 5
With fiery rage their eyeballs glow ;
Their rude arms clash with hideous clang ;
Torches wildly hurl'd in air
Flash round the rocks a direful glare :
Frighted Skiddaw heard from far 10
The rattling of the scythed car ;
Wide Windermere with mountain echoes rang,
And Keswick's silent lake shook with the shout of war.

High on a dark cliff's beetling brow,
 Which casts its broad embrowning shade 15
 Across the rugged dell below,
 The Bards, in radiant rows display'd,
 To the fierce troops, that wildly pass beneath,
 Their kindling numbers breathe.

Gallant warriors! to your fires, 20
 In days of yore, by Deva's stream,
 Rous'd to fury by our lyres,
 Darted battle's vivid gleam.
 The faulchions, now that glittering rise,
 Shone at your fathers' sinewy thighs; 25
 Each axe has cleft a valiant foe;
 Each spear has laid a Roman low;
 And all those scythes through legions flew,
 Drinking life's empurpled dew.

14. *High on a dark cliff's]* This, and the latter part of the composition, may bring to the Reader's recollection the sublime Bard of Gray. The Author hopes, that he shall not be hastily condemned as a plagiarist: for he trusts, that, upon a more accurate inspection, a striking difference will be discovered both in the imagery, which is selected, and in the mode, in which it is applied.

29. *Life's empurpled dew.]* Sparsi rorabant sanguine vepres. VIRGIL.

But nobler triumphs wait the coming day : 30
 From cold Alaunus' northern shore
 Kilda's famish'd eagles pour,
 And hovering shade their destin'd prey.
 Yonder darksome clouds behind
 Joyous Hesus snuffs the wind, 35
 To taste the tainted gales, that bear
 Fumes of bloodshed through the air.
 Fated Romans ! hope no more
 To roam Hesperia's breezy shore ;
 You have look'd your last on Tiber's waves ; 40
 Albion's rocks shall be your graves.
 Britons ! tofs your torches high ;
 Bid the scythed chariots fly,
 And burst the mailed files :
 With frantic yells, 45
 Pierce Helvellin's brier'd dells,
 And shake the distant isles :
 Lo ! your fires' shades ascending point the way ;
 Mador and Hoel call you to your prey ;
 And Taranis from high in thunder gives the day. 50

31. *Alaunus.*] The River Tweed.35. *Hesus.*] The God of War.50. *Taranis.*] The Jupiter of the Britons.

Fir'd by music's magic sway,

Madly bursts the British band:

Aghast, unnerv'd, and fix'd in wan dismay,

With curdling blood the spell-bound Romans stand.

Each on the other looks with speechless gaze; 55

Then views around the dying and the slain,

Sadly revolves the palm of happier days,

And thinks with keen regret on Zama's plain.

But soon the souls, that fir'd the Britons, fall:

Then on their basely-turning foes 60

The firm rekindled legions rose,

And rear'd the nervy arm, that tam'd this nether ball.

The Bards perceiv'd the yielding throng,

And quick resum'd their magic song:

By your fathers' warrior-shades; 65

By antique Mona's holy glades;

By Cambria's rocks, that stream'd of yore

With many a Conqueror-Roman's gore;

58. *Zama's plain.*] The battle of Zama, in Africa, in which Hannibal was finally defeated.

By each car and flaming brand,
 That drove bold Julius from our strand ; 70
 Turn :—and blushing fear to fly ;
 Revere your kind, and dare to die.
 The soul shall quit the stiffening clay,
 And mount through air to brighter spheres ;
 In warlike sports with Hefus play, 75.
 While Hoel's music charms the ears :
 Then again in earthly mould
 Shall Snowdon's forked peaks behold ;
 Again through legions scatter death ;
 Again for freedom pour its breath. 80
 Life is but a middle space
 In endless being's circling race ;
 And bold in battle to expire,
 Speaks the soul of heavenly fire.
 But ah! the captive's mournful fate! 85
 To swell the pomp that marks his shame ;

77. *Again in earthly mould*] The Aboriginal Britons, believing in transmigration, imagined, that the soul after death would return to earth, and animate future warriors.

79. *Again through*] Vide Mason's Caractacus.

To knee the chief his foul must hate,

And hear a coward blast his name :

To tread Hesperian ground ;

To drink of Tiber's hated stream ; 90

With downcast eye,

With many a sigh,

Sullen, with fetter'd limbs, to move along,

The sport or pity of an abject throng :

While conquering warriors pass with laurels crown'd ; 95

And Albion's pictur'd cities beam around ;

Cymbals and clarions swell the triumph song ;

And plummy helmets wave, and groves of lances gleam.

The Britons hear ;

They blush ; they turn ; they fight ; prevail ; 100

And those, whose eagle, high display'd,

Shadow'd this sublunary sphere,

And made the kingdoms of the world grow pale,

Now, trembling, flee before a British spear,

And dew their mails for shame with many a burning fear. 105

By glory rous'd, and touch'd with nobler fires,

The Bards in holy fury seize their lyres :

Ye shades of heroes, nobly slain,
 Fighting for your native plain ;
 Sons of war, who bravely sped, 110
 Boadicea at your head ;
 If your souls, return'd to light,
 Chase the wolf down Snowdon's height,
 Or muse on blood in caverns drear,
 Or poise in darksome groves the spear ; 115
 Come, behold the radiant flame,
 That speaks the glory of our name.
 On Skiddaw's summit mid the skies,
 Let the blazing pile arise,
 That o'er the mountains, dark in night, 120
 Wide may stream the glorious light.
 Hark ! the huge clefts of Borrowdale,
 And lonely Derwent's peaceful vale,
 Repeat the dying sufferer's mournful wail.
 Lo ! wild Lodore her thundering torrent stills, 125
 To hear the distant groans roll down the midnight hills.

Each groan, O vanquish'd Rome,
 All-mournful knells thy doom.

In yellow Tiber's orange shades

Cæsar's pining form shall lie,

130

And cast on distant Rome a tearful eye,

And shuddering seem to hear the clash of Albion's blades.

Revenge shall hunt your rashly-daring band,

To your own viny hills and olive land ;

Our barks shall ride your hostile main,

135

Our scythed chariots shake your hateful plain,

And o'er your seven proud Hills gleam many a flaming brand.

With burning breasts the warriors catch the sound,

And raise a yell profound,

And clash their gory shields,

140

And point with finewy arm Hesperia's southern fields.

With alter'd strain, in measures soft and slow,

The minstrels melt the tender heart to woe.

Morcar's breast has ceas'd to beat ;

Gash'd with spears the warrior lies ;

145

Bold he turn'd the base retreat,

Gain'd the day, and clos'd his eyes.

The wounds that scar his manly breast,

Like blood-stain'd trophies, grace his bier;

Yet Nature views the scene depress'd, 150
 And silent falls a pitying tear.

Empty beneath yon oak his car is cast,
 Stretch'd o'er the mead his courfers breathless lie;
 Remembrance wakes the glorious triumphs past,
 And fills with tender grief the gazing eye. 155

No more beneath the morning sun,
 With dazzling helm, in Nature's pride,
 The warrior down the rocks shall run,
 His faulchion glittering at his side.

Near yonder brook shall rest his bones, 160
 His gory axe beside him laid;
 The spot be mark'd by mossy stones;
 And tears of warriors wet the blade.

With bended forms the mourning Chieftains stand,
 And gaze the paly corse with stedfast eye, 165
 And silent muse on frail mortality;—
 And softest sorrow melts the sympathetic band.

Abruptly in triumphant strain
The minstrels strike their lyres again :

Morcar, warriors, is not dead, 170

He again shall rear his head,

Lift the axe, and dye with blood

Wide Sabrina's sandy flood.

For long as Cambria's streams shall run

Sparkling to the golden sun, 175

Thro' warrior-forms, from frame to frame,

The soul shall deathless shift its flame.

Ye, who to wilds and northern mountains fled,

In keener skies make the hard rocks your bed,

Shall visit earth in happier day, 180

On Thames's cultur'd margin play ;

Shall wear the laurels which ye won of yore,

And taste the freedom purchas'd by your gore.

We, the Bards, shall frequent die,

And rise to breathe our native sky ; 185

Enshrined in more than mortal forms

Sing 'mid Cambria's mountain storms ;

In gentle summer's even-tide
 Recline on Mulla's reedy fide;
 Or haunt for ages Arun's humble vales; 190
 This harp on Avon's bank shall found;
 Hoel's high soul within the Heaven's high bound
 Prefume an earthly guest, and draw empyreal gales.

But ye, brave Chiefs, in distant days,
 Shall claim a more exalted praise. 195
 Ye, as the ages flow unfold,
 Kindling a mighty Saxon's patriot mould,
 To peaceful homes and social fires,
 To cultur'd plains and festive boards
 Shall call from hills and woods the wandering hordes, 200
 And lift the lofty city's glittering spires.
 Ye, as the years in happier courses fly,
 Where Thames's crystal waters feed
 The grassy plain of Runnimeade,

189. Spenser.

190. Collins, Otway, and Mrs. Charlotte Smith.

191. Shakspeare.

192. Milton.—*Into the Heaven of Heavens I have presum'd
 An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air.*

PARADISE LOST.

197. *A mighty Saxon's]* Alfred.

Torn from a tyrant's hand shall bear on high 205

The sacred roll of liberty.

On ocean's marge a fable prince shall stand,

And shew a captive monarch to the land,

And, pointing to his conquests o'er the main,

Bid swell the thrilling blood thro' every British vein. 210

See the white sails swell,

To Albion's cliffs ye bid farewell ;

And Sion's rocky summit hears

The frequent clash of British spears.

Lo ! in a train of golden years 215

A virgin queen appears,

Fir'd by the spirit, which of yore

Bonduca's warrior-body bore :

Sublime on Albion's whitening cliffs she stands,

The schemes of unnam'd empires in her hands ; 220

And bids Britannia's banners wave unfurl'd

O'er oceans now unknown, and circle this wide world.

206. The signing of Magna Charta.

207. *A fable prince.*] Edward the Black Prince.

210. The crusades.

216. *A virgin queen.*] Elizabeth.

Thou, Oscar, on the cliff's rough brow,
 Nodding thy dire plumes o'er the captur'd foe ;
 Whom Hefus to immortal fame consign'd, 225
 Ere yet the soul in earth was shrin'd ;
 Thou in time's remotest space
 Shalt fire a patriot form divine :
 The sceptred race
 Shall cross the dark and stormy brine, 230
 From where Germania's broad romantic streams
 Resound the mountain monsters' midnight roar ;
 And, as they prowling roam the craggy shore,
 Reflect their rugged forms to the moon's paly beams.
 Ev'n now thro' fields of purer air 235
 Andraſte bids prepare
 Hours of delight and years with glory crown'd,
 To move their golden round,
 When bleſs'd in his imperial ſway
 The ſun more glad ſhall ſhine and kindlier paſs the day. 240

228. *Patriot form divine.*] His preſent Maſteſty.

229. *The ſceptred race.*] The houſe of Brunſwick.

236. *Andraſte.*] The goddeſs of fate.

There rest on clouds reclin'd,
Sceptres, and laureate wreaths, and naval crowns,
Tower'd cities, fleets that ride
In mastery the ocean-tide,
Domestic sweets, that meek contentment owns,
And emanations of the mind,
That add a nobler nature to our kind.

245

Lo! to our dazzled sight
Wide over torrid sands and winter zones,
Britannia's pendant proudly streams;
And every star, that beautifies the night,
Where'er it roams, on Albion's empire beams,
Or when it pales at dawn its setting light,
Or from the misty wave uplifts its circlet bright.

250

They sang:—and rapture brighten'd every eye;
With pealing plaudits rang the vaulted sky:
When o'er the eastern fummit's darksome shade
The moon rose mellowing the grey rocks, and play'd
On the still lake:—the warrior host retires
To crown the mountain tops with sacrificial fires.

255

260

THE
CAPTIVITY
OF
CARACTACUS.

THICK rose the lances dyed in British gore ;
With scar-entrenched limbs and shining mail,
Their blood-stain'd plumage nodding to the gale,
The lords of empire darken'd Albion's shore.
His dreary conquest shaggy, waste, and rude,
High from the prow the imperial eagle view'd :
Beneath the proud bird's hateful shade
Siluria's captur'd prince was laid

5

S. Siluria's captur'd prince] Caractacus, king of the Silures.

4
Silent

Silent and still and stern; the conqueror foe

Shook at the savage firmness of his brow.

10

While as the broad keel plough'd the briny way,

O'er the pale cliffs, that lessen'd to the fight,

The bearded Bards, in robes of radiant white,

With harps that glitter'd to the orb of day,

Along the calm cerulean main

15

Pour'd a bold inspiring strain;

And bade their monarch's towering foul

Proudly upborn disdain a foe's controul,

As Penmanmaur uplifts its awful form,

Affail'd by ocean-waves and Cambria's mountain storm.

20

Catch, O Rome, in swelling sails

Fickle fortune's favouring gales;

Flutter in your sunny noon;

Night and storms will gather soon.

Ev'n now o'er forests gloomy, joyless, rude,

25

'Mid savage wolves and winter's famish'd brood,

The deepening tempest darkly lowers;

Erewhile to burst on Cæsar's myrtle bowers,

And deluge Tiber's vales, and shatter Rome's high towers.

There

There a race of nobler kind, 30
 On banks of frozen streams reclin'd,
 Slumber 'mid their polar nights ;
 Or, fleet as winter wind,
 On oſier targes ſhoot from ſnowy heights ;
 Or rapid ſkim in unwet ſled 35
 The froſt-bound ocean's glaſſy bed ;
 Or down the ſlippery precipice
 Chafe the bear through vales of ice ;
 Or from the promontory's hanging ſteep
 Plunge, like a meteor, to the briny deep. 40

Down from many a ſummit hoar ;
 From pale Mæotis' miſty ſhore ;
 From ſhaded Dacia's mountain tracts,
 And rocks engulph'd with cataracts ;
 From polar gales, that keener blow, 45
 Edg'd by bleak Riphean ſnow ;
 Bony, and direly grim, of giant ſize,

30. *Race of nobler kind.*] The northern inhabitants of Europe and Aſia, who deſcended from their mountains and forests into the more genial climates of the globe, and overturned the Roman empire.

Who, towering, seem to leave behind
 The lineaments of human kind,
 Wild as their storms and hardy as their skies, 50
 They rush;—awaken'd by the sound
 Of injur'd kingdoms groaning round;
 Like the red bolt of Taranis from high,
 To prostrate purple tyranny;
 Then rais'd aloft on Cæsar's tomb, 55
 To wave in air the rough Hercynian spear;
 And, giving freedom to this vasty sphere,
 Revenge, O patriot Prince, thy base unworthy doom.

O Prince, when loos'd from mortal clay
 Thy spirit mounts the aerial way, 60
 And joins our fathers' armed shades,
 Brandishing their gleamy blades,
 Tell them the cause in which they died,
 Is Albion's buckler, Albion's pride:
 Tell them each spot, whereon they bled, 65
 With life-blood of the foe is red:
 Tell them our babes are taught to wield
 The curtled axe and bloody shield:

Though

Though Rome's aerial eagle, streaming gore,
 Sails darkly shadowing Britain's naked shore; 70
 Though frowning from the cliff's projected height
 Her haughty battlements our plains affright;
 Yet tell them, their own dauntless zeal,
 To guard and dignify our country's weal,
 Glows in their faithful sons: and when again 75
 They draw the morning gale on Sarum's plain,
 Their limbs shall move unshackled, and their veins
 Wander through sinews undebas'd by chains.

That holy spark of freedom's flame,
 They struck with life into our moulding frame, 80
 Tell them, deep in northern snow,
 On stormy hills, in mossy bogs,
 'Mid sickly marshes, blue with fogs,
 On many a shiver'd cliff's dark-hanging brow,
 Whose fearful fragments fill the vale below, 85
 Pure, vigorous, glowing, we maintain;
 To prove our high descent from freeborn fires;

81. *Deep in northern snow.*] The Britons, when defeated by the Romans, retired into the north-west parts of the kingdom, and there remained unconquered.

And, when their souls are veil'd in earth again,
To warm them in the womb with their own generous fires.

That flame, O patriot Prince, shall glow 90
In native lustre on thy martial brow,
When thou return'st, beneath the beams of day
To animate a kindred clay.

Then, when thou goest all terrible to wield
Trifingis' blazing faulchion o'er the field ; 95
When from thy awful port the hosts retire,
Like stars before the sun's ascending fire ;
When thy tall plumes in all their terrors rise,
And flame, like lightning, flashes from thy eyes ;
Then shall our scythed chariots, as of yore, 100

Wheel round the giddy steep,
That overhangs the deep,
And headlong roll our foemen to the shore ;
Again shall Druids look superior down
On mortal kings, and awe them with a frown ; 105

90. *That flame.*] This whole paragraph is founded upon the idea of transmigration, and the return of the soul of Caractacus to reign again over Britain.

The potent wand shall wave its magic round ;
 Through holy groves the golden axe resound ;
 And altars, bright with flames, illumine
 Another Mona's solemn gloom.

Then to the silent midnight orbs of fire, 110

On moonshine banks of haunted streams,
 'Mid grey oaks mellow'd by the night's wan beams,
 The Bard shall touch his silver wire,

And soothe the sleeping wanderer's fairy dreams :
 While, as the soft suspended numbers fail, 115

Through the tall pines, that up the cavern'd steep
 Rise midway waving o'er the deep,
 In each soft murmuring gale

A warrior's troubled spirit seems to moan,
 Or Misery's wasted form to pour her feeble groan. 120

Go then, O Albion's pride, and dauntless stand
 At Cæsar's throne : think on thy native land,

121. *Go then, O Albion's pride.*] The two following paragraphs are founded upon the behaviour of Caractacus at the throne of Claudius Cæsar, as described by Tacitus.

Thy

Thy long illustrious line of freeborn fires,
And the proud blood that circles through thy veins.

Though low debas'd by chains, 125

Though pale and wasted by the tyrant's hand,

'Tis thine to glow with thy fam'd fathers' fires ;

To bear unconquer'd the high mind ;

Thy dignity of being to revere ;

What great souls own, what generous warriors feel, 130

In simple boldness to reveal ;

Though their own Jove, with red right arm uprais'd,

In which the forked lightning blaz'd,

Sat, as prepar'd to strike, and bent his brow severe.

So Claudius, laid on Tiber's viny mounds, 135

Beneath Campania's sunny skies,

And lull'd by music's tenderest sounds ;

Whose eagle meets the morn on Ganges' stream,

And travels with the day, till eve's mild beam

Illumes the wave in Gallia's western bays ; 140

He, to whom marble temples rise,

And altars, rich with perfumes, blaze ;

Who,

Who, number'd with the immortal gods above,
Hurling the bolts of fate, moves only less than Jove:

Ev'n he shall glow

145

gle With generous envy toward a captive foe ;
And blushing wish, that far from shady bowers,
Imperial domes and spiry towers,

His infant limbs had roll'd in Cambrian snow ;

That Freedom, near romantic Vaga's tide,

150

Had hung her gleaming faulchion at his side ;

While the keen northern blast

Harden'd his manly sinews, as it pass'd ;

And the steep mountain hoar,

And the wild torrent's roar,

155

Maintain'd that inborn nobleness of mind,

Which lifts and dignifies our common kind,

Firm as Plinlimmon's base, and free as ocean-wind.

Such was the lofty strain,

Which, mingled with the murmur of the shores

160

And melancholy sound of dashing oars,

Came, soft by distance, o'er the heaving main

From

From Albion's cliffs :—on whose romantic brow,
 High o'er the world of waters towering grey,
 Yet faintly linger'd the pale gleams of day, 165
 While fearful darkness veil'd the waves below :
 Till deepening gradual, the dim night
 Gains on the topmost disappearing height ;
 And all the starry skies with fires unnumber'd glow. 169

T H E E N D.

